

AGN. NO. _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS AND
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November 13, 2018

Immigration Legal Assistance for Abused and Neglected Children

For over 100 years, the Children's Bureau, housed within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), has worked to address immigration issues impacting children and families. For example, HHS offered programs for unaccompanied children evacuated from Europe during World War II, and provided assistance to unaccompanied Cuban refugee children fleeing the Castro regime. More recently, the policies and procedures involving immigrant children at the federal level have dramatically changed, resulting in significant concern among children, families and their advocates in Los Angeles County.

In Los Angeles County, a number of children in the child welfare system have a need for immigration relief. These children, often brought to the United States by their families fleeing violence and oppression in their home countries, have found themselves involved in the child welfare system after sustaining abuse or neglect at the hands of their parents or primary caregivers. For various reasons, these children may find

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themselves unable to reunify with their parents or return to their home countries, thus requiring immigration relief to ensure their long-term well-being in the United States. This unique immigration relief is known as Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). Other forms of immigration relief may also be available to the child.

Los Angeles County is home to one of the most sophisticated child welfare systems in the nation. Unlike many jurisdictions, children in Los Angeles County are appointed counsel in the dependency court, where their best interests are explored and their cases are adjudicated. However, those attorneys do not practice in immigration court. As such, when a child needs assistance beyond the dependency court, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) works to ensure the rights of children are protected. For many years, DCFS, often in partnership with legal aid organizations, has capably ensured our children's immigration interests are addressed in the immigration court. However, due to the shift in immigration practices at the federal level, immigrant children in DCFS custody now require more intensive and extensive legal assistance to ensure their rights and interests are protected. In collaboration with DCFS and the Children's Law Center, a legal services provider with expertise in immigration law will be able to address these needs for DCFS-supervised children on an intermittent basis as requested.

WE THEREFORE MOVE that, in order to meet the social needs of the population of Los Angeles County, the Board of Supervisors:

1. Instruct the Director of DCFS, in consultation with County Counsel, to enter into a public-private partnership contract, at a cost of no more than \$250,000, for a one-year term, with two additional one-year periods at the option of the County, for legal services

for children and youth served by DCFS who are in need of immigration assistance, given that such legal services are necessary to address an emergent and time-sensitive need.

2. Delegate authority to the Director of DCFS, in consultation with County Counsel, to execute the options to extend and to execute amendments to this contract, as needed, to accommodate unanticipated program needs and increase or decrease the maximum contract sum by 10% to accommodate any unanticipated increase or decrease in units of service.

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